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The CHANGELINGS

By

LUCY M. ROSS

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THE CHARACTERS

MLLE. LUCIE ..... *Mme. Joffret*
HER AUNT ..... *M. Joffret*
M. RICHARD ..... *Victor*
COUNT GUSTAVE ST. JEAN

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PREFACE

My title puts me a little ahead of my story, originally written in a synopsis of seventy-five words for a movie.

I found scenario editors and producers were a close corporation, into which, like a burglar who has broken into a safe, once in, there were great rewards to be had. There is no copyright for a synopsis, only fiction and the reel. Therefore, I chose the short story.

AUG -8 1921

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CHAPTER I

Introducing the Characters

I was a young lady student in Paris, France, attending certain professor classes at a ladies' school. My mother, returning to our home in the States, left me at my aunt's. She lived in an apartment on the first floor of a house owned by the Count Gustave de Saint Jean, whose nursling foster brother, M. Richard, lived on the ground floor and was the agent, employing his sister, Madame Joffret, and her ex-soldier husband as servants to himself.

Aunt was the widow of a French refugee, with property in New Orleans, later restored to grace by Napoleon III, dying shortly thereafter. She had contrasted her married life with that of her sister, my mother, concluded Americans made the best husbands and encouraged no French ideas in me.

M. Richard being so badly crippled and of such a fine character, however, she felt no objection to introducing me to him. I spent most of my leisure time out of doors on his terrace in the rear garden with him. His sister liked me and was always ready to chaperone me on the streets or in the art galleries. In her white cap, large white apron and with her straight carriage, she was the personification of dignity in service.

By my sympathy I made a great friend of her, when she told me she was the nurse who injured M. Richard by letting him fall. She had climbed the broken stone steps of an old ruin on the St. Jean's estate, a thing often done before without mishap, but recent rains had undermined a stone on which she stepped in her descent; it slipped from under her feet, as she fell, the babe she held seemed to fly out of her arms to a lower ledge with his back on a stone. Although hurt herself, she felt it not in her fright for the babe, who was unconscious, she feared, dead.

Every breath she drew on her flight with him for home was a prayer he'd live, no matter what was in store for his life. She regretted that selfish prayer when she saw his sufferings. I consoled her with the idea that it was hard for a rich man or able man to enter heaven, so it was, perhaps, easier with his poor body, and heaven was the best

anyone could achieve. God had permitted the misfortune. He would bring forth good; and we must help all we could toward that good.

She showed her liking for me by surprise teas and luncheons of which she invited me to partake with her brother, while she waited upon us in the order she thought proper to her station.

Her husband, after his household duties were completed, for his private purse sold macaroons from a long tin cylinder, attracting sales by means of a noisy rattle. The pair had been denied children, so both took to me.

I was interested in the gold and silver church and court embroideries and designs that were M. Richard's employment. It may interest many to learn of this work which required tools adapted to it, such as needles with two eyes, as metal thread cannot be bent. They were threaded as a bodkin and the end snipped at each side to a sharp point so as not to catch at the sides. A flat ribbon of metal was pointed the same without a needle to aid, if strong enough, for the arms of the cross or the largest rays of the surrounding rays of glory, which was made of all sized threads in long stitches.

A backing of book muslin was tacked on with long stitches of white thread on the back of the material. This was to keep it from drawing up and to have the stitches fastened in at the start or end of stitches, as these threads can not be knotted.

A working drawing was enlarged from a small design. Headed pins were at the outer ends, pinning it to the place at the principal end of rays, this was measured exactly on the thin paper guide.

The size of the lamb's place was marked off and cut out of this paper guide. When the principal rays in paper were torn off, then the needle with two eyes filled the outline of rays. A stiletto started the needle holes.

The padding of the lamb was made on a cut out lamb of the paper muslin, molded with fine cotton batting; under the batting were fastenings of wire to spread after entering the goods.

The stem of the cross was a slanting stitch of ribbon metal up to and end in the lamb's place. The lamb looked woolly because it was made with a silver thread like the overstrung strings on a violin or guitar, only much finer. It went back and forth and was caught down with a needle full of waxed thread that went under, back and forth, to meet it.

A lamb like a button could be applied, but this would not be as firm as if embroidered on the goods. A finer thread was used for the head.

When completed, the muslin was cut away. A burnisher of an agate in a porcupine's quill brightened up the stitches where needed; they were of sixteen or eighteen

karat gold. No threads were held down on outside by stitches; tacking threads were cut close to the outside material so as to be sure to pull out with the surplus muslin backing when cut off. A piece of soft wood was used with a knife and ruler, for strips for the rays, but if there were none, the widths furnished were preferred. All cut lengths were measured so as to save the expensive thread, and pulling through the heavy material.

The Count, our landlord, in compliance with a vow made to his dying mother to care for his foster brother, visited as usual and met me. The Count was in the guards, but visited in civilian clothes, they being more free from observation. The Count always brought a gift after meeting me, more often a box of imported Philadelphia candies. He would hand them to M. Richard, who unwrapped them and gave them to me to distribute. When the Count took one of the smaller kind I suggested he take several at once. "Oh, no," objected M. Richard, "do as I do, prolong the pleasure of having mademoiselle busy in offering them." The Count needed no leadings in gallantry. Right before him Mme. Joffret would warn me of him as a gay boy, spoilt from a baby; this in a nice gay French way, but behind his back she would say he was too "epris" of me. Richard said they could understand that, therefore, forgive; I was sensible enough and knew it was persiflage and certainly he was always a gentleman, so we would get back at once to our more useful reading.

CHAPTER II

The Birthday

My aunt went with a friend to the modiste, and the saleslady asked if they knew a young lady, a returned dress sent out too late, would fit, it was a great bargain. Aunt thought of my birthday and had it sent home. She showed Mme. Joffret the beautiful surprise for me. Only two days before my birthday that lady told her gentlemen and M. Joffret in his turn refused to sell Victor, the Count's valet, any macaroons, as he was keeping the last of his stock as his surprise for the little American's fete. Victor thought he had surprised this news from the old man, and in turn carried it to his master, who dispatched him at once for his own surprise, some candies I preferred. Victor caught the inflection so far as to give Mme. Joffret a bouquet for her table and entertaining.

Thus do secrets and scandals spread, the careless word, never to be recalled.

Mme. Joffret with some embroideries she had, ordered a scarf made with them. I took gifts from these friends for I was amply provided and could make returns.

Aunt had been given an invitation to the opera in the place of a lady of the party not being able to go; and when she saw me in the fine dress, she made up her mind to take me and risk there being room.

I let the maid do my hair in grown up style. She wanted to rouge and powder me as well; I refused the paint but submitted to the powder. Then I sped in my finery to my friends below stairs.

"What have you done, my child?" were the first words of M. Richard. "Spoilt your so clear complexion with nasty powder, and so thick too! Goodness on us! Your greatest beauty was that clearness of skin; it seemed transparent. Now look at it." I said I didn't like it, but the maid was so kind on my birthday, and said night-lights required it. "Come to me, lend me that lace rag, your handkerchief, I'll do all the repairs possible." And holding my chin in one hand, he wiped and rubbed the stuff off with the other. "There, that's better. Never use powdered minerals or even cereals to dust your face. Unavoidable dirt is sufficient evil."

To dissipate his anger, I was laughing merrily at him, when Mme. came in with Victor's flowers, saying, "I took them from Victor, I wanted them for the table. He wanted to see the 'Americaine,' but I am not to be fooled. I was afraid he could hear you laugh. It's a good laugh, and may he think it was at him."

M. Richard had a preparation of his own, some vanilla beans steeped in cognac and sugar, a fine but strong drink. They put water in my glass and added the liquid. Mme. Joffret then filled liquor glasses for Monsieur and herself, and we clicked glasses with Monsieur and he made a toast. We had just put our glasses down while M. Joffret answered a ring, and the Count's jingle of military trappings and hasty steps approached. He entered with his salute of clicking heels and bow, looked at me with, "Pardon, Mademoiselle, what a surprise a change of coiffure can make with you ladies; even a hair's place can produce results. Allow me to compliment you on your appearance."

"Yes," I replied, "fine feathers make the difference. See my new dress from my aunt." And I turned all around to show it off. "My scarf with the beautiful flowers on it, is some of Monsieur's own work. I'm so happy for the unexpected gifts. And the macaroons on their papers here, tied with a big ribbon, from M. Joffret, too. The maid took in your confections, but I have been remiss in not bringing them with me here. I saw your card, though I didn't need to know the sender, did I?"

Count: "I hope so, but why the secret? Why was I not to know about your fete? I only found it out through Victor not getting the macaroons I ordered him to get for me. Why so selfish of you all?"

Mlle.: "Oh! I'd forgotten everything about birthdays till this morning aunt gave me the letter from my parents she had, and the dress to try on. She showed my dress to Mme. Joffret, and Mme. got busy at once about the scarf. She didn't like black for me, but it was a piece of good satin, left over, and another bargain."

Count: "Julie, you can't sew, did Richard make the scarf as well as embroider it?"

Julie: "It is not embroidered, only applique, I took the embroideries I had to see what could be done with them, and was persuaded to buy the black satin. It is a useful color but too old."

Count: "But why didn't you tell me about the date, you seem to have had plenty of time?"

Julie: "I have not seen you since I was shown the intended surprise dress. Do you mean to say, I should have sent you word?"

Count: "Well, I understand Victor surprised it out of Joffret."

Richard: "Not at all, he was free to tell it."

Count: "I understand you, I gave Julie the credit of it all. I have not liked her badinage, her portraiture of me. I don't take any of my pleasures at the expense of others, more especially my friends."

Richard: "You have reason, I should not have allowed it. I thought only of her loyalty to her sex."

Julie: "I can say for myself, I had no thoughts of pleasure, Mademoiselle is safe from that fear. My motives was loyalty to her aunt, who told me of the intentions of her parents, and the reason she kept her niece to studies and in seclusion."

M. Richard: "That's sufficient. Mademoiselle is present and it's her fete, such as Americans keep, not her name day but the day of her birth. She is not staying with us this evening, but is ready to go with her aunt to the opera, not for the first time in her life, but the first in a long time."

Count: "Let me see what flowers we have here that she could wear. Her coiffure has no ornaments."

Mlle.: "No ornament! Why Louise spoilt no end of ribbon on it before she got the effect she desired. Is it not enough for me?"

Count: "Yes, yes, but it will be more perfect the way I propose for it, you'll see."

The Count went to the table to look over the flowers there.

Count: "I know Victor was going to give Julie flowers for her entertaining. These are doubtless his, a mixed lot at a bargain, also I suppose. Here is a stray camellia, good white but no leaf, a single flower should have a leaf. All the same, it must do."

Taking it out he held it toward me. "Mademoiselle, you are wearing your gifts. Will you honor me also and wear my camellia in your hair? They are lasting and stand heat well."

Mlle.: "As it makes the third bargain, and three is a complete number, I cannot refuse such luck."

Richard: "Three a complete number, what do you mean, Mademoiselle?"

Mlle.: "Don't you know the meanings of numbers and colors? Why, the trines, beginning with the Holy Trinity—Father, Son and Spirit. The family, Father, Mother and Children. The Man—Body, Spirit. The Inmost God, Eternal Life,—and so on. The Colors—White, the truth, containing all colors; Blue, Faith; Red, Love; Purple, the mixture of Red and Blue, charity, or brotherly love. The whole of the rainbow's hues. I find their study charming."

Richard: "Where do you get your meanings? Who is your authority?"

Mlle.: "A poet greater than you have as yet introduced me to, although he wrote only in dry Latin prose."

Richard: "Greater Poet? Is it possible?"

Mlle.: "Yes, in descriptions, spirituality, interpretations of forms and material terms; with more lofty prophecies and previsions that you find so marvelous in the poems. I am more attracted by his poetic than by any other of his powers; at least that first attracted me to his attentive study, as it would you, M. Richard."

Richard: "And in imagination, Mademoiselle?"

Mlle.: "Oh! some say he went crazy in his imagery. He claims it was a Revealed Science; but I'll tell you of him some other time. I have to put the Count's flower in my hair; he is waiting on me." I reached out to take it from his hand, and as my fingers touched his, I felt his hand slightly trembling, and unable to assist me in quickly taking it, he seemed to me to pinch it, so I seized it and carried it at once to my head and thrust the stem into a coil there.

Count: "That won't do, it may fall out; you must secure it there. Here, Julie, a hair pin."

She took one out of her braids and wiped it on a napkin, then advanced to me and pinned it in.

Count: "How awkward and badly placed it is. I feel like putting it in myself. I have taste, you see."

Richard: "You better not try, Gustave; you'll muss her hair. It is safe there; its color is quite effective."

Mlle.: "I'm ready now, I must go to my aunt."

Count: "Wait, Mademoiselle; we have to drink your health and many returns."

Mlle.: "We have done so, just as you rang the door bell."

Count: "Then I must have it drank again." With a more steady hand he refilled the standing glasses with the liquor, placing one in front of me."

Richard: "That's too strong for Mademoiselle. She can have no more now; one never knows the first effects of strong drink."

Mlle.: "M. Richard is right. I'll take a little of the vin ordinaire; but very little, as I have not yet acquired the taste for dry wines."

We all held up our glasses for the Count's toast, who said, "To sweet sixteen, is it not?"

Mlle.: "Not quite so childish an age, Monsieur," I smiled; bending my head sideways, giving him a mischievous look.

To the surprise of all he said sharply: "My God!" (A French exclamation). "Don't look at me that way, Mademoiselle."

I looked down, sobered with mortification at his words and started movement. He had spilled a drop of wine also. Then hanging his head he said softly, "A thousand pardons, Mademoiselle. You have beautiful eyes, but you don't know the danger that lies in them. I'm sorry I for-

got myself so far. I am tired out and nervous, I find. I've had a hard day." He had been at a review.

Richard: "Is it that the spirits mount?"

Count: "No, no, I have not tasted wine today, you know I intended coming here. But I'll drink our toast to —what is it?"

Mlle.: "A year's more experience and wisdom."

Count: "Then to sweet 17 and may there be 70." We all drank and I started for the door.

Count: "Mademoiselle, do you know what seats your aunt has in the House?"

Mlle.: "No, but she feared they would be crowded, and some gentleman would have to give up his seat to her."

Count: "Then it's a box, I'll be there, but late, as I can not alarm your Aunt with these togs." (Motions to himself.) "I must be humble and change to civilian. If Victor has left the Hotel I'll be hampered, but I'll be there. Please say nothing but expect me."

I left for above stairs, he lingered for a word with M. Richard, I heard him leave as I met Aunt at our door, I hastened on my wraps and we were off.

CHAPTER III

At The Opera

There was room and I was given a place in front of an old gentleman. The lady who rented the box sat beside me, and Aunt just behind her. A lady also sat way back, keeping out of sight most of the time. At about the middle of the play, Aunt directed my attention to a box a little apart from the center boxes; we were on one side. She said, "That man looks this way so often, turn your back a little more toward me and shut off his view somewhat." I did not look to where she had said the man was, but I felt sure it was the Count.

When the intermission came a few minutes after, some gentlemen entered the box. One, an elderly, white haired gentleman, shook hands with the lady and my Aunt, and then I was introduced, but we did not shake hands. He turned toward his young companion and introduced the Count to us all in the same order. The Count said he knew me and had wanted to know my Aunt. He kept all his attention and talk for her. He did not seem to see me at all, but I thought that quite right. I knew she was worthy of his steel and quite awake at guarding me. Her remark to me when we arrived home was, "He is dangerous for he is in earnest. Now be most careful, my dear; think of your parents' wishes for you."

CHAPTER IV

The Unfortunate Lie

M. Richard had his own apartments cleaned yearly as needed. The cleaning of his room was in order. The things were placed anywhere handy and covered with a cloth against dust. Mme. Joffret was busy at this work when my Aunt took sick with a fainting and the grippe, that is so common in Paris, that even the cats and dogs have it. It is said to have come from Russia. It rained that morning when the walk to school was undertaken. The Bonne insisting on accompanying me as usual. I was telling her I preferred she let me go alone, as under the protection of the umbrella I would be hidden and safe, not anyone being anxious to be out in the rain if idle and open to mischief; and as Mme. Joffret was not available she might be needed at home. We were so occupied with our controversy that we did not notice that we were passing a large City Club and men as usual were at the windows looking out into the rain. By one of those strange Providences I so much object to in written romance, coming so pat at needed moments, we stopped and parted right in front of the Club, she giving me the umbrella and turning without one for home, while I went on my way loaded with books, luncheon and umbrella. She saw but I did not, the Count putting on his hat, run down the club's stone steps, and overtake me. I heard no footsteps; his were light and the umbrella was so well down, that I could hardly see. Near the curb my umbrella was firmly pushed aside a little, and the Count's face appeared with, "Let me carry your books, I pray you."

"No! no!" I said. It must have been the slight straightening of the ferrule now needed, that caused the middle of the load of books to bulge forward and fall to the wet ground, the top ones fell also but were caught by his dextrous hands. I begged him to return them to me after he had also rescued the fallen ones. Knowing no French gentleman would let me pick them up I did not even try to do so, but holding out my arm to receive them with the only safe one in my hand, I begged their return.

Count: "Let me do you a service. They'll only fall again and get spoiled. Be reasonable and good!" (In French "gentille.")

Mlle.: "I consented with 'alors,'" meaning, well then.

We arrived at the school yard door in the high brick wall. I rang, the latch was raised and the door opened with a spring. It opened inwardly, and to keep it open I put my foot against it. I closed my umbrella and was given the books with a bow and acknowledgment of the pleasure I'd given. I said nothing, being very angry at my misfortune of the morning.

Whoever lifted the latch had to look out to see who had entered and if it was all right. This morning, instead of the usual caretaker, it was a young teacher, daughter of the head Professor, who stayed at the window while the Count with a laugh raised his hat to her also.

I ascended the outer steps and entered the hall door. The teacher met me hurriedly and asked, "Who is that young man, Lucie?"

I lied promptly, not wanting to explain, "He is my Uncle."

"But he is French."

"Yes, my Uncle is French."

CHAPTER V

The Crucifix

The workmen gone, I resumed my interrupted visits. I found M. Richard mending an ivory and ebony crucifix that had been thrown down, a workman catching in the cloth covering. He told me he valued it above all his things, because it was the only thing of value his benefactor and confessor had left to the world and he had desired it given to his protege. "His interest in me," he said, "was so well known that his Vicar had carried out his wishes. So self-denying and charitable had he been that his seamstress had complained he wore his clothes so long and they had to be so much repaired that she dreaded their return to her hands. This was reported to him in the effort to make him more generous to himself. He remarked that he had thought she needed the work and liberal pay. It was her need and pride he studied and not his own, but he stood corrected for the future. This is of his charity, now let me tell you of his wisdom.

"The first time I saw this crucifix, a present the old Count brought from Rome, he brought it for me to see. 'Father, you have said to me in my rebellion "It is God's will!" and shall the clay say to the potter "Why formest Thou one so?" but this is His Son whom he has let suffer and that Son asked, "Why hast Thou forsaken me?" Is it that Our Father is cruel?' 'Child, there are things even Angels have to study. I can not tell mysteries to you, for you have so much time to lie and think you can not close the door of your reason. Let's see how much you can perceive, even understand. You know God's object in Creation was a Heaven of loving subjects, from choice of their own. A free choice at first so that it is said He walked and talked and His Grace was ever present with them. He gave them a developing reason and Spiritual nature. He put before them the ways of Life, to chose the Love of Goodness belonging to Him and be with Him in orderly life and happiness, or the Love of self and the evils belonging to the love of self, disorder and sorrow, turning from the love of the Creator, who never interferes with that free willed choice, which is the very essence of man his free will.

" 'Evil on the contrary destroys that Libre Arbitre (free choice), for evil is a tyrant and destroyer. There's no Devil God, but evil has grown to such power in the ages from man to man, just as the spirits cast into the swine said, "we are Legion for we are many." Developments not yet in perfection have disorders of their own as they develop in nature; that is of God. There is therefore betterment and regeneration for the Earth, and men are in process of forming their souls, their individuality. There is hope for all men and all things. But a time once came when men had become so selfish and wicked that hope was nearly lost, and as our poets said: "Man's inhumanity to man made high Angels weep." The still voice of Conscience, the aid of our Guardian Angels, was almost destroyed also. God's works are ever before Him. He said: "I looked for rescue and there was none"; again, "I bowed down the Heavens." He came as man to man, veiled His majesty in our human nature and form, and as you say in the Angelus, "The word became flesh and dwelt among us." No man had or could see the Father at any time, but in the Emanuel He had been brought to view. "Who seeth me seeth the Father for I and the Father are one." His coming was a Divine process that had many meanings above your comprehension. One was to be an example that man could live the life He asked, and He would be with him in that effort, by His spirit the Comfortor the Holy Ghost; man would not be forsaken! His freedom of choice, in his heart, to do well, would not be destroyed by the power of evil.

" 'He had the Hells of Evil spirits to conquer and put in subjection. He had to fulfill the Laws, to carry out the Golden Rule before the eyes of man. To show His life faithful to all of this, He had to be faithful unto death, as also man must be. The work must be finished, and with Him, a God, it must be a perfect work. His cry in death was the cry of the Son of man, as well as the Son of God; of His human nature assailed by all the combined powers of Evil, from which fearful assault His coming and His death has served man. He said: "The Father within me doeth the works." The Father was within him in death and had not forsaken Him. His wisdom knew the whole need and the perfect work was done by a God of Love and Wisdom. It needs never to be done again; as He said: "It is finished," no one can add to that.

" 'Now we have not a dead and gone God, we have a Risen God; a Redeemer, whose rising you praise on the Easter Sundays; a Risen Christ, whose very body was made Divine, for He said: "A Spirit hath not flesh and blood as I have," and He made the doubting Thomas feel of Him. That something we are not given to understand must have been necessary to that Divine Body is shown by his forbidding Mary at the tomb to touch Him. He said:

"For I have not yet ascended to my Father." All was not yet Divine, or He does not want us to approach Him in His imperfection, for He spoke no light words.

" 'Personally, with submission to my superiors, I think we should have more paintings of Our Saviour in this glorious ascension as well as in His Crucifixion,—the work done and the result therefrom. In your prayers of thankfulness for a blessing or a peace, or a resistance of temptation, raise your spirit to Him in His Glory and see Him as the Angels do, and as you also will see Him when you enter into your reward in His Kingdom.' "

Mlle.: "I thank you for giving me His explanations adapted to the mind of an intelligent child. You must have understood or you could not have given it to me so simply. The very word 'mystery' always raised an unreasoned rebellion against the ignorance or the slight effort given for my enlightenment. My mother had a habit of saying to me, "Do as I bid you now, I'm too busy"; or, "I have no time to give you any reasons." I submitted with grace for I knew at the proper time the reasons would be given. But not so with my confessor. It was authority exercised and humility demanded. He did not so fully obey the command, "Feed my lambs," as did my Mother. Also the simple cross is my more favored image. I even took the tarnished figure off the cross now over my bed, and put it carefully away one Good Friday. My Aunt thought it a sacrilege, but it must have been less so than the dislike I had for the old metal image. I think we become too familiar with His suffering and a little indifferent. I'm sure it makes some morbid.

"I'm sure it has had some effect on Mme. Joffret, for she said the longest prayers at the tombs with the wax Christ, we saw in visiting our Churches. It seemed as if she said the whole of the service for the dead, although I stood waiting for her, but maybe she didn't see me. So one day I was not surprised at her conduct. We were going to cross a bridge and there was a crowd of people near a little stone building. I asked what interested the crowd, as she had stopped and was also interested. She said it was perhaps a new corpse. I asked, 'What is in that building where they are going in and out?' She said that it was the morgue, and she wanted to see the new find too. I said I did not, that I had no desire to go into a morgue. 'Very good, I can't leave you outside, and I mean to go in,' so as she was always kind I went in with her. There were glass partitions with forms on slabs. A few faces were uncovered and a lot of clothes hung on nails at the sides of the glass cases. I asked, 'What are they there for?' 'Oh! to be seen by anybody who knows them; they belong to those who had to be buried.' I said, 'It's wet inside there.' And she said, 'That's the melting ice.' I said, 'Let's go,' but she ob-

jected, she had to say some prayers for their souls, poor things. She never passed the morgue without seeing and praying for those in it. I think she's morbid, for she also kisses her crucifix too much."

Richard: "Mademoiselle, if you only know how many dead she has laid out for their friends in her life, you'd understand her. No two people have the same experiences or think alike. You seem to be like those Egyptians who chased the useful attendants of the dead, those who did the most needed work and removed the interior organs. The church does not encourage morbidness, but I know from an experience I'll tell you how willful and obstinate my people are in any ideas they cherish. Our youngest sister, Marie, is the example I have in mind. She had to be disciplined by my benefactor, our Saintly Curate.

"A stone was uncovered in the workings of a quarry on the St. Jean estate, with curious markings, resembling a virgin with a child in her arms. Some old men claimed there'd been a chapel there before the Revolution and it was undoubtedly her seal. It was consecrated ground. All work stopped, and the Curate, seeing the excitement, sent for the Vicar, who came with some priests. They examined and listened to the villagers. Then they went to the Archbishop of Coutance, an old man, who was put to the inconvenience of travel in his coach. He brought some geologists with him who said it was a fine specimen of common origin. People had come from far and near and had worn the stone away so badly that to show it a wet cloth had to be gotten from the washerwoman at the stream below. Everyone was forbidden to pray to it, as it was not to be blessed. I was ill just before the stone was found, and Marie was among the first, relying on her name, to pray for me there. I had heard the band playing while the Archbishop dined. My confessor was too busy with the church guests to come to me. I was wild to have a miracle performed on me. The excitement of my desire caused me to forget all my ills and in the night try to get up. I succeeded in getting out of bed but mother came in and put me back again. I had performed a marvel, it seems. Marie told everyone it was an answer to her prayers. She insisted against their verdict. Satan had deveived them. They didn't know, she'd say. All the village encouraged her. The Vicar had not only to preach but to visit the most obstinate. The fact that I had moved caused a collection to be taken up to get a surgeon from Paris, from whom I derived great benefit, but who diagnosed the case and said there could be no cure. Marie persisted, and the Curate refused her confession if she would not accept the decision of both the learned and the church. She walked a long way to another village to confess, and the Curate denounced

her from the altar. Thus are the French faithful to an idea, and slow to change.

"This experience showed me the necessity of the priesthood, the control by a body of trained intelligence prepared not only to teach truths, but to enforce order under them;—That 'the powers that be are ordained of God.' Marie learned her lesson. She is still living with her husband in Marseilles. He and our eldest brother ran off to sea. He came back to tell of that brother's death at sea, married and took Marie away with him. It is from him I get the cognac brandy and the vanilla beans; also other gifts he can get to me.

"Julie married Joffret soon after. When my mother caught pneumonia and died, the Cure set to work to find me a home, as only a child a little older than I was left to be company to my old father, who was mother and father both in one. Before arrangements were completed for me to learn the metal embroideries, he, too, was called home. He felt the end was coming and wrote to the Count and Countess in Paris, to see that the arrangements were carried out, as in his estimation they owed me great concern for my injury. His letter puzzled them, but they thought he was having his mind affected by his illness and austerities of life—the closing of that natural memory that is so often evident before death. This seemed the more so as he enclosed a poor fifty cent ring the Countess had given him in their childhood, to remind her that he counted upon her remembrance of that time to accept his request of my charge. Gustave learned of that letter and ring, when after her death he went through her effects. A fifty cent gift amused him much, and he had to tell us of such strange care of a trifle.

"The Count outlived all our elders, being over eighty-seven years old when he died. He is gone over two years, but Gustave never went back to the old home. I think he will go when he takes a Chatelaine with him and makes it home-like once more."

CHAPTER VI

My Nemesis

After the opera the Count called to inquire of our safety home and enjoyment of the talent. I, however, was not sent for, though he inquired what I thought of the star soprano. He felt he must go slowly so waited the New Year, only two weeks off, to send the usual gifts to friends called "etrennes." Then came a large "Pate de Foies Gras" (liver pie), and a full blooming shrub of Camellias in a pot, with only a picture card of Bonne Anne tied to it. My aunt's pie had within the wrapper his personal card, with best wishes for the New Year. My aunt was so greedy that she kept the pie and therefore the shrub. She made suitable acknowledgment.

Having inquired below stairs if I were in, he called again. This time he asked boldly for me, and was told I was too busy with studies, had begged not to be disturbed, and would he call at a more opportune time? Here I may say that aunt knew nothing of the carrying of the books to school, and the Count, guessing that, said he'd not seen me in weeks. But that information was coming to her that same day.

Just a little after the holidays there had been a collection taken up to buy that teacher, still curious about the Count, a silk dress for her birthday. Her mother had suggested her want of one, and would see to it for us.

When it was sent home she promptly called upon aunt in it, who sent for me to meet my teacher in the "salon." When I entered I saw the two ladies standing in front of and looking at my uncle's oil.

Without a greeting of good day, the teacher said, "Lucie, this is your uncle; your aunt says you have none other in France. Who was the young man who brought you to school and gave you your books?" Looking only at aunt I answered, "It was the Count, auntie." Aunt then said to her, "Our landlord. She has met him here and at the opera with me. Why she lied about it, I can't imagine. I'm glad you told me about it. It was uncalled for to you. I am sorry she treated you so." I hung my head and left the room.

Aunt had to tell my friends about the lie. They made all possible excuses because she said no more to me, and did not forbid my continuing my visits there.

I felt I must see my friends about my lie. I entered, saying, "I'm desolate, I am ashamed of myself that I could lie so easily and forget it. It seems to me looking back that my lie flew like lightning; indeed it was a lightning of evil from those evil spirits that must infest my heart. My Guardian Angel must have lost power, I fear, long before, it was so natural! I am alarmed when I think of myself, I changed my prayer to, 'Leave me not in temptation,' for I was so left. I have read that we must be tempted in order to win, and to strengthen by exercise those qualities which must rule, I've also read that that is a wrong translation, but I have paid no attention to that authority. I have also added to my prayer of 'Our Father,' the Protestant ending of 'Thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory, Amen.' Do you think I am doing wrong? For I felt I could realize more easily the Glory of my Savior when I asked His strength for me; also to rise in my repentance to that resurrection and see Him as the angels do.

"Because a thing is used by others does not make it wrong, my dear friend. As to the translation, I am no scholar; but if you need that help you've a right to ask for it. As to our forms of prayer and even teachings, their authority is not like money pieces, just so, stamped and counted out. They are more like the cut diamond, have many faces, and the light of God's truth is seen from our different angles. The church gives precious stones to her children. You have cause to fear, for St. Paul says we must work out our salvation in fear and trembling. Remember, my dear friend, we are helping Him to expand His Glory and power by every good act we do and strengthen the evil powers by an opposite action, like drops of water, each wears away the stone of our resistance and unfits it for God's Temple. We are immortal; there's nothing light about that, and for every word our souls shall give account. There's also more rejoicing in the repentance of a sinner."

Mme. Joffret here said: "Poor dear! I have scolded Gustave for so embarrassing you that you had to satisfy the teacher's curiosity by claiming relationship. It's all his fault." And so I was comforted by Richard and Mme. Joffret.

CHAPTER VII

The Evasion

Speaking of angels one hears their wings, and so now the ring of the Count, and thereafter his cheerful entrance arrayed for conquest, this time, as it turned out from his first words after his greeting. "Oh! I'm a happy boy. You've honored me by a relationship I did not forsee, in my desire to be something nearer. Now if you are not amiable to me I'll get an introduction to the appreciative lady, and let her capture me. What do you think of that, Mademoiselle?"

At another time I could have countered his banter, but the seriousness of our previous subject left me sensitive. I went straight to M. Richard's chair, put my hand on his shoulder, and said in a peeved tone, "Make him stop teasing me about that."

Richard, taking down my hand into his two and holding it, said, "In his present mood, no one can do that but you, Mademoiselle. You'll find him wax in your hands."

Count: "Most certainly I'll do anything and everything to please you, if you'll only be as kind to me as you are to Richard. I'm hungry for kindness, yours above all, Mademoiselle; give me hope that you'll be ma bonne Amie (my sweetheart), and at your pleasure my fiancee."

Mlle.: "But I have no desire to be the fiancee of a Frenchman."

Both (Simultaneously): "Why?"

Mlle.: "Because the French are conscripted, always in that bondage. I don't love the sword!"

Count: "Mademoiselle, the sword is peace to France. She must be always prepared for her enemies or suffer. I've found you very patriotic. America is much to you. The same here for Frenchmen," and he broke into the last lines of the song, "To Die for My Country is Most to Be Desired."

Richard had already released by hand, so the Count took it, saying, "Who is teasing now, and more cruelly, too, Mademoiselle?"

I withdrew my hand firmly but quietly. He made no great resistance but his eyes opened more widely.

Count: "Are you in earnest? Is that the reason? I felt you had something against me; can it be that? I thought it was something I could remove, but I fear I have not the power to remove such objection. With me must be that trinity you spoke of on your birthday—church, wife and country. Must I withdraw my pretensions?" And he approached me. I put my hand on Richard's shoulder again and was silent, looking down at Richard's hands in his lap. He looked up at me. The Count stood a few minutes looking at us puzzled, then drew up his full height, clicked his heels, made a bow, turned on his heel and marched out of the room, head up, the picture of military training. Mme. Joffret followed to wait upon him.

When they were out of sight, I laid my cheek upon Richard's head and said, "But I do think it brave to die for one's country."

"It is a mistake then? I thought so, call him back, he'll come." And he called, "Gustave! Julie!"

Only Mme. Joffret answered, "Well," and hurried the soldier off.

Entering, she questioned, "Well, what?"

Richard: "She says she loves a patriot. It must be something else. I don't understand why she weeps."

Mme.: "I do, it is instinct, which she does not feel toward him, as you see. She cares not for him but for you."

Richard: "But I must never love, never have a sweetheart—you know that, Mademoiselle. It is the will of God. I have long known it. Be kind to him who has never been denied before. He is honorable and earnest. Think things well over, and allow me to write to him what you have said to me, and the conversation we were having." And he bowed his head on his hand, the elbow on the arm of the chair, needing quiet.

Mme. Joffret took my hand, leading me from the room, saying, "I would speak with you in my room, dearest Mademoiselle."

She sat me down in her big chair and she sat on a trunk in front of me. She was much excited. She asked, "If M. Richard had wealth and position, the power and glory of the world, as Gustave has, would you marry him for his love and companionship?"

"What's the use of asking that," I temporized. "He doesn't have them."

"Yes, but if it were possible, as I know it is possible, would you?" I hung my head silent; a thought came into my mind—she knows something, give her chance. She continued, "Gustave can console himself, but Richard never. I can't bear to see Gustave get everything. They could divide; there's enough for both." And she mumbled to herself.

Mlle.: "Speak out, my friend, don't you want me to write to Gustave."

Mme.: "No! No! Don't write. I can rob no more."

Mlle.: "Tell me plainly what you know, what you want of me. Trust me. It will give you peace. If you know of a wrong done, right it here on earth. It will help God, as M. Richard said; you heard him."

Mme.: "Death has released my vow. I was tempted to tell all when the Countess died; that was the time set. I waited to see if Gustave would do rightly by Richard. I never thought of love until your aunt spoke of your parents. She said that Americans did not have to have parental consent after they were of age. You could choose your fate. I did all I could to prevent love; but as Gustave said himself, he was hungry for love, and so was Richard, and you were so lovable, Mademoiselle, so lovable and wise."

Mlle.: "Yes, yes, my friend, you've been so good to me, trust my gratitude. Let me share your trouble, your secret, I think."

Mme.: "Oh! me, I've said too much, I must tell you all and let you decide for me. You'll know what is best. You know how things are now, Mademoiselle. I told you I let M. Richard fall. But he was not Richard. He was the true and only Gustave St. Jean. It was much farther than the church to get a doctor, so Marie was sent for the Cure, who, from the first, saw despair. The Count and his wife were on the way home from travel for her health; there were no other heirs. The mother talked things over, and my parents agreed to exchange infants. Then we took a vow, on the crucifix, and that's why I kiss it so—it was a part of the vow to me. We took the vow of secrecy until the death of either the Count or the Countess. The one old, the other delicate; no long lives we thought them. The mother assumed support and all expense of the child we thought would die. Then the mother died first, and we were all afraid to tell. Her death was not in the pact. I was not at home but was married, and so was Marie. She wrote, 'Wait and see how they act. Keep quiet.' You instinctively felt that my own brother was an imposter; you were so different toward him. I thought God would prevent all of this that has happened."

Mlle.: "You and I are not wise. You are released from your vow; all are dead who could fret. Think of the deceit of years and relieve your soul. Tell all to M. Richard. I know he'll be wise."

I put my arms around her shoulders, kissed her and drew her with me, resisting slightly when I said, "You must, my friend, it is but right." I opened the door. Richard, still head in hand, looked up at me. Mme. stood rooted to the ground in a tremble.

Mlle.: "My friend, call her in, she has a secret to tell you. I said you'd act wisely."

Richard: "Enter, my dear Julie, for I have been long expecting your secret. I have prayed for it; not to profit by it, but to know. This doubt was tempting me now, while you were out. Tell me all I'll do rightly by you and yours." He motioned her to him, put his arm around her shoulder and smiled up at her and said, "So I am Gustave. Tell me all." She turned to be seated and he seized her hand and kissed it, the first Frenchman I'd seen kiss a hand since I had come to France. No one kissed my aunt's or mine. Mme. Joffret sometimes kissed me on my forehead. She told her story.

Richard: "The hours I've studied over this are ended. The fact that you always used a handle to my name because I was so old-fashioned, didn't satisfy me; then there were my long slim hands and filbert shaped nails like the hands of the old Count. I will write it all out for Gustave to receive at my death, and you will both sign it. A notary need not know of the contents but will witness your signatures, so if by any chance anything should ever come to light, my will and testament will give legal right to our brother. If you or Marie die before me I'll give it to Gustave to open at my death. Thank you both for trusting me. The memory of it will be sweet to me. Let us all be content, Mademoiselle. With you the secret is buried."

CHAPTER VIII

Judgment

"Dear Sister, do not sorrow over the past. 'Let the dead bury the dead.' Think of your reparation, the satisfaction you've given to me, and be cheerful. You know, 'The Lord loveth a cheerful countenance.' As to my poor body, why our bodies are but like the chestnut's burr; it opens to decay, while the nut escapes. The sweet kernel is still protected by a hard shell with its soft lining—the outward material memory of the 'Earth Life,' which, though immortal, partakes of its corruptions, and as the apostle said, 'Corruption cannot enter in corruption.' Its work being completed it is not wanted in a spiritual world of uses. It has to be opened and judged; it is our book of life—our diary of every word for which we must give account—the acts that helped to guard and form the kernel, to make it perfect or to dwarf it, to let in the weevil and the maggot, the evils that injure the soul. The hard protecting knowledges, the truths we learned, are as in this shell. It has a soft lining of kindly thoughts and warnings in temptations of our guardian angels. They have fulfilled their office and are with us no more. The animus, the moving Love of the Soul,, the individuality formed during the Earthly Life, is all that counts now, for the Lord Judge closes this memory, this book of Earth Life, wipes away every tear; and stains of scarlet. He makes white as snow. He makes perfection through the law of "to those that have much, much shall be given," and to "those that have little, even that little shall be taken away." Every soul received the penny for their day's work. Duty done receives according to the love therein. Duty neglected, love rejected, all like the youth who kept the commands but could not deny self to attain to love. Dives is not accused of any broken commands, only of selfishness, in that "he took his ease" and forgot the possibilities of development in the mind of the one denied and made a beggar, by man-made economic forces. We know their states as told. Let us rejoice that all that ceased on earth. The rags that clothed our bodies, the diamonds that bought consent to sin, the cheated wage or at chance, the hoarded wealth, like fairy gold, have turned

to their true value. 'What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul.' Let's hasten to repent, for 'His tender mercies are over all His works.' 'His mercy endureth forever.' "

CHAPTER IX

Sequel

For unpremeditated sin, Providence often keeps us from seeing the results to others and ourselves. It is not in our power to command the good or prevent the evil so that even sin with good intent is forbidden us, and Hell is said to be paved with good intentions.

My unpremeditated lie, to deceive the teacher and cut off a long catechising was more far-reaching than any one would foresee. The way the Count took it and the issue has been told; the way my aunt acted was a surprise to me.

Leaving my friends, I took with me M. Richard's parable of the chestnut and the mental world, and from it felt a duty to my aunt. Kissing her I said: "I fear I am a great trial to you with my impulsive thoughtlessness. I have just offended the Count and refused him. I have the consolation of being a friend to M. Richard and have been the means of doing him a service, which he wishes to be kept secret so he will thereby have sole control of it. I have promised to keep this secret as it concerns himself."

My aunt kindly said, "That is well, but Lucie, you have done wrong and told a most foolish untruth. It seems to me much easier to have said: 'That gentleman was a friend or acquaintance of my aunt.' That would have satisfied her, as she could not expect an introduction to an acquaintance. When you saw she had seen the gentleman with you, you must have thought out how you would account for him. I will have to move away. The Count will not like the chance of meeting you, and I cannot harm that dear cripple by keeping his only friend away. I have been years in this house. I doubt if in all Paris there's another house, except of course a Palace or Private Hotel, with a garden. Way out here in Chausse Clignan Court, they are crowding buildings. The Count wanted this small garden, or this also would have been sold. It is a good thing, my friend, Mme. V. is leaving Paris, I will take her apartment in Rue Blue. It is not so airy nor so large, but more central. This is far out for my friends to visit me."

My aunt was a woman of quick decisions, her imagination and foresight true and commonsensed. She was most considerate, and placed M. Richard under no obligation of thanks to her, but in a business way gave her notice. He as agent reported to the Count as usual.

All mail was delivered to Mme. Joffret. On coming in a few days later she was delayed while the "Bonne" went on. When the upper door closed she said, "A letter I did not take up but kept for you. It is in the Count's hand." I thanked her, saying I was glad the lines of my life were so entirely in my own hands, and I hastened to read it in my room.

After the opening salutations it said that he was sorry to lose my aunt, so long a tenant of his, and was glad of the friendship his foster brother had enjoyed, hoped that it would continue, even now that it was not so easy to visit him.

M. Richard had thought it best to tell him that I did not mean what I said of Frenchmen, but I loved not the sword. He could imagine this natural in a young lady, who hoped with Scripture that the sword would be made into plough shares; when the poor would no longer be with us, but everyone live under the shade of his own olive and fig tree. We all prayed for this in our "Pater Noster," but this good time was to be when "all things were made new." In the mean time, France was so placed that any day might see her invaded.

He had been so stunned and hurt at my words that he now felt he had not shown me proper delicate patience, and to end his self reproaches, being sure under my influence he would become all I or his lost sainted mother would wish, he presented his proposal for the sacrament of marriage, and begged a kind and early reply, etc., etc.

The tone of the letter called upon my better nature. I was in doubt of myself; the lie had rang so spontaneously at the test, whereas truth, if in me, would have given instant response. My worldly aunt had answered with the truth. M. Richard even thought it duty to prevent evil or wrong being done that good might come. I could not go to either, now a new test was upon me; for I did not mean to tell the Count or anyone the truth of my change of feeling toward him; because he had offended me by his reprimand on the mischievous expression of my eyes, when I bantered about my age. I had often made repartee funny grimaces and done my best to tease, without remark. It must have been that my more mature coiffure stole from me my child's indulgence. I said to myself, "The truth must not be spoken at all times. However, I must do rightly. I need advice, I'll go to the only place I can go without chaperonage, for Confession, Instruction and Strength of will."

CHAPTER X

Advice

Daughter, you've come to the source destined for men. The church is militant because she fights evil, and teaches we must make the good fight and bear our Cross to be the loved children of God. You've learned of confession, that contrition is not enough. There must be repentance, evil must be conquered. You must not ask that the temptation God sees necessary for your spiritual development shall be remitted; but say, Thy will not mine. You must do your part and say as St. Peter, "Save Lord, or I perish;" or, "I do believe, help Thou mine unbelief;" and have Faith in His Grace to help, for evil if not entertained or tolerated will depart. If you are lukewarm He "will spew you out." If you intend sin you will be condemned. There's always intent more or less in sin, the momentary desire to do bodily or other harm, or in your case to deceive, which may not be premeditated; they are from the evil heart, and this state is ours mostly because of our lives and intentions that have formed such a connection among themselves that they are our true selves, our individuality, our souls.

To do evil that good may come is sophistry; the poison there, if persevered in, will end in evil intent. It is a direct command "Do not evil that good may come."

Our martyrs have given examples of the Faith which we must have, as also hope and charity, Love of God and man. Think how much less you are called upon to resist, and give God your heart. You have Free Will; you must choose your conduct for yourself.

Dinner was ready on my return. I thought I had heard that it is wise to sleep over a thing, and make not haste in time of trouble. I sang and played the piano for my aunt, and waited till the morrow to write.

Upon retiring I prayed as follows:

Guardian Angels, mark our paths
And all our ways attend;
Inspire our minds with thoughts of God,
Still ready to befriend.

Great God, do your good Angels wait,
On one as mean as I?
To guide me in my erring state
And lead my soul on high.

Oh! gracious Lord, whose Love Divine,
Such care has shown for me.
Grant strength to force my forward heart,
To be inspired and led by Thee.

It was a bright morning that awakened me early. I had my reply ready and wrote pretty much as follows:

M. Le Count St. Jean.

Dear Friend:

I admire your letter too much to be able to destroy it, so return it that you may know what has become of it. I thank you for the honor you have done me, and your letter is engraved on my memory as a proof of your merit. But, my dear friend, I find I am not capable of the task you ask of me. I need so much discipline to be good enough and have never had serious thoughts of the blessed sacrament.

Like the butterfly, I want to enjoy my freedom to make all and everything love me. To have the little tots in the parks come to this stranger and put their dirty hands on my knee, or my aunt's cat to purr in my lap.

I am too thoroughly selfish to admit what the church teaches me, "That I am made by Love, for Love and to Love." I must for a few years accept all and give nothing.

I return shortly to my parents to give them the devotion and sympathy due them, and my company in return for all they have done for me. I look forward to this duty.

Think kindly of me as a ship that has passed.

With sincere respect and good wishes for your future, I sign myself in the intimate name you have always used to address me.

MLLE. LUCIE,
Your American friend.

The letter went by M. Joffret in his tin cylinder. On moving I gave his wife an English ivy plant, the leaves being useful to her. These ivy leaves were sold in the market in bunches filed on a thread. She took me to a large Fair held on the banks of the Seine near the Column of July. She wanted me to see the produce of her native department. There were cheese and sausage and smoked meats from all over France. She bought some ivy leaves at an herb stand. I asked about their use. She said she paid the penalty of being an old woman; it was for her "Seton," a continued sore kept open by a threaded bead or pea, covered with a leaf, renewed daily.

CHAPTER XI

Conclusion

Frequently men are seen with earrings, believed to strengthen their eyes, and other evidences of the unprogressive Latins. Non-believers say it was due to their church, which does not encourage education. She is thrown back from her depressive, visualized, crucified Christ, upon the Virgin Mother in her apogee of love, crowned with her infant in her arms, standing upon the Serpent, in all the happiness and glory so necessary for hope and courage to man.

They err. The church's emphasis is on the Easter, when she puts on her beautiful garments of joy, according to the Scripture, "Shake thyself from the dust" (dust was a sign of mourning), "put on thy beautiful garments. O! Jerusalem, Thou Holy Holy City." Then she calls all to the mass, to partake of the Eucharist under pain of sin, if neglected.

That men cannot visualize the Risen Redeemer in His glory is because they know they are not fitted with a World War of five years, and unjust taxation for it, on industries and productions and not on tax-free securities and idle lands. So unjust to man! Can they see a just Redeemer, a Prince of Peace? Her leaders say: "The church cannot go too far ahead of the mass, cannot give strong meat to babes. She must cut and fit the pieces of her mosaic with studied skill, according to the growth of the design; for—

Thick waters cannot image things,
Like waters crystal clear.
The church can only give her pearls
To those will hold them dear.

The world has not yet realized the Resurrection of the First Advent. Progression is now due. If His Second Advent is to accomplish this work, all churches should co-operate in a broad Catholic endeavor toward it. We must learn to know our Risen Redeemer and Prince of Peace.

(Finis)

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